

"I'll kill the next man you feed," I said. "Eat your bread yourself."

"You got the last mouthful," she said.

Never a suspicion that she might be lying crossed my mind. I paid no more attention to the girl. My mind was obsessed by another notion. I thought I would swoon as I retraced my path to where Jinks was lying.

"Say!" I said, hoarsely, "you say you're willing to die to make a meal for the rest of us?"

"My God, yes!"

"How are we going to kill you?"

Jinks stared wildly about. There were two blunt knives aboard and an axe. I took no stock in the axe. Not one of us had the strength left to lift it. The knives were too blunt to be of use in opening a vein, for the simple reason that every man on the raft had been brought so low by hunger and weakness that he could not have pressed it even against his own skinny wrist.

"I'll tie a handkerchief about my throat and strangle," said Jinks.

He had the knot tied in a jiffy, but he was too weak to pull with enough energy for strangulation. He gave up in five minutes and lay still.

But the procedure of Jinks had given me a suggestion. I crawled over to the one bit of rope still with us. It bound the timbers of the raft, we had hastily constructed when the ship went down. But try as I might, it was too strongly knotted to be unloosened by any effort of a starving man.

Here was a crisis, indeed. Our one hope of life was the slaughter of a man, but here were we too weak from loss of food and drink to be capable of murder.

"Mr. Blake!"

Starved though I was, I almost started up. The girl's lips were once more at my ear.

"I must tell you something," she gasped.

Her long hair fell in a cascade about my face. She turned to look at the others behind me, as if she were fearful of some secret of which she might be sole guardian. In another moment I knew what the secret was, because she bent her head over mine and kissed my lips.

How cool her mouth was! It was like a long cold drink.

"Now, you know," she whispered. "I love you. Wait one more day for me."

In another minute she was making her way back to the cook's side. I saw her dip her rag into the flowing sea and swab his horrible feet as he lay against the sea chest. But I thought no more of death.

Slowly and heavily the burning sun dropped into the waters far beyond the sky. Out peeped the stars. The starving men all about me lay like logs of the raft that bore them on, on. I could barely discern the shadows we made as midnight drew forward and brought the moon up the sky.

"Blake!"

I turned my head slowly at this whisper of my name. It was Griggs.

"Let us hang on another day," he whispered. Then he swooned.

"Yes," I whispered, in an hour, when he recovered consciousness. "Let us hang on."

I no longer remembered, as I said the words, that our last bite of food had gone down our throats the day before; that our last few pints of water were in the barrel beneath the mast. I would live for love. Griggs crawled back to where the cook lay.

"My darling!"

I barely caught the whisper, but I had seen her coming and the sight revived me. I tried to put an arm about her waist, but only a hand reached hers.

"Dearest," she whispered, "don't let them see us."

She had kissed my lips and gone before I could utter a word. It was as well, for in a moment more I was looking into the glaring eyes of Jinks.

"We'll wait another day," he said, "another day before I die to feed you all."

His face was withdrawn, but I had not the strength to gaze after his retreating figure. Nor did I think of death any more. My mind ran on that devoted girl. How pretty she seemed among the starving thirty of us! Would she come back and kiss me once again. I managed to lift my head from the bottom of the raft and turned it for a sight of her. The blackness of a Pacific night was upon the deep, yet I could see the outline of the sea chest, behind which she retreated for sleep when the shadows fell. The cook's bulk obscured its outline to my glance, for he was sprawled in front of it. The dawn could not be far away, unless the stars were lying, but the sea was rising and falling heavily like a sleeper in pain. A vague alarm for her seized me on a sudden, and I essayed to walk to where she was.

I could not get upon my feet. Upon my hands and knees I moved like a shadow. Had I the wealth of Ormuzd and of Ind I would have given all of it to be able to speak her name aloud. But what was her name? It dawned upon me for the first time since we kissed that I knew not her name nor anything about her. She was one of the passengers in the wrecked ship. So was I. Then she could not possibly know my full name, unless some purser or steward had revealed it. Well, I would question her regarding these things when I had reached her side.

Would I ever do so? Minute after minute I spent crawling to the chest. The starving men lay in slumber or in swoon quite motionless. I wondered if the cook, too, could be asleep.

My head swam from the exertion of so much of my strength as was left after these long days without food or drink. I collapsed and lay motionless, until repose should have brought back some capacity to use my knees and hands.

I heard whispers. Her voice! Slowly I wrenched my neck about until my eyes were on a level with the top of the sea chest. There I clung, fearing to swoon!

"Darling!"

"Wait one day for the woman who loves you."

Then I heard the sound of a kiss.

Slowly and silently I dragged myself to the top of the sea chest. A strong fury had brought me strength. I peered down upon the girl.

She had one arm about the cook's neck. Her long hair swept his face. I could see by the light of the moon that his horrible paw rested upon her shoulder. I would have given this world for strength enough to clutch her by the throat.

"Wait one more day for me, beloved!" I heard her whisper. Then she stole around to the other side of the chest.

I was waiting for her. Resisting an impulse to drag her with me into that running sea—an impulse for which rage and hate would have given me strength—I hissed:

"Wanton! I saw you kiss that Dutch fiend. I heard every word you spoke to him."

The little blood left in me rushed to my brain and I fell beside the chest. She crawled to where I lay and put an arm about me.

I bit her.

"Leave me!" I managed to groan faintly. "Leave me!"

I could just make out the dawn at the other extremity of the horizon. I resolved that this day would bring my death.

"I had to do it," I heard her whisper, as she placed her lips to my ear. "That Dutchman would have killed one of you a week ago for food, but I made love to him to save our lives. I took his knife away while he had still strength left to use it and I threw it into the sea."

"You lie!" I managed to hiss out. "Griggs wanted to die that we might eat him."

"Yes, and I won him over to life with my kisses."

"Vile woman!"

I wanted to roar the words, but my voice scarcely attained the volume of a whisper. She had placed my head in her lap and I lay looking up helplessly into her face. Fury filled me and I tried to call for help.

"Jinks!" I moaned. "Jinks!"

"Jinks will do nothing for you," she whispered. I have bought him, too, with my kisses. I have bribed every man on this raft to wait by telling him he alone has my love."

She relaxed her hold of my neck and leaned against the chest like a woman in a faint. I watched her closed eyes with the helpless fury of a starving man.

"Had I the strength," I muttered, "I would throw you into these waters. You have been the ruin of us all."

"I have saved you," she whispered. "Look!"

I followed her pointing finger with my eye, and upon the waters, lit up now by the dawn, I saw a sail.—Mirror.

Back in "the 'forties" there was an antique lawyer in Chicago of the name of Pallas Phelps—a name both classical and Yankee. He was a nondescript of the profession, who, though he often appeared in court, never had an office—at least, no one ever knew where his office was. One day, when the unpaved streets were in a more than commonly filthy state, Judge Butterfield and Pallas Phelps met on a narrow street-crossing. "Good morning, Brother Phelps," said the judge, "you haven't swept your office this morning!"

"I am sending you a thousand kisses," he wrote to his fair young wife, who was spending her first month away from him. Two days later he received the following telegram: "Kisses received. Landlord refuses to accept any of them on account." Then he woke up and forwarded a check.—Chicago Record-Herald.

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